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## 27. OCCURRENCE OF *THOSEA ANDAMANICA* HOLLOWAY (LEPIDOPTERA: LIMACODIDAE) ON COCONUT IN THE NICOBAR ISLANDS, BAY OF BENGAL, INDIAN OCEAN

Seventeen of the 31 species included in the genus *Thosea* are insular endemics, of which *T. andamanica* has one of the most restricted distributions (Holloway *et al.* 1987).

As early as in 1925 outbreaks of *Thosea andamanica* were reported from South Andaman (Isaac 1925), the first of the Andaman group of islands to be colonised by literate man in the late nineteenth century. These outbreaks, between the years 1922-1925 were reported on coconut (*Cocos nucifera* L.). Subsequently, in 1991 (Bhumannavar *et al.* 1991) it was reported as a minor pest of oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.). This was followed by a report in 1992 of an outbreak of the limacodid in a 68 ha coconut plantation in S. Andaman (Ansari *et al.* 1992).

*Thosea andamanica* has so far not been recorded from the Nicobars (Holloway *et al.* 1987), a group of islands separated from the Andaman islands by the 150 km wide ten degree channel (Snow 1970). For the first time we report the presence of this moth on coconut from the Central and Southern Nicobars in the islands of Katchal and Great Nicobar.

The larvae, which were found in large numbers on coconut fronds (2 to 3 larvae per leaflet), were collected by K. Veenakumari from the Nicobar islands during a recent survey for insects in August, 1993. They looked larger and appeared to be different from, the *T. andamanica* larvae collected from the Andaman islands. However, the adults that emerged from these larval rearings were identified as *T. andamanica* by Dr. J. D. Holloway of the International Institute of Entomology, London. *Aphanogmus manilae* (Ashmead) (Hymenoptera: Ceraphronidae) were collected from containers containing dead *T. andamanica* larvae. *Aphanogmus* spp. are known to be hyperparasitoids. And, Isaac (1925) found *Fornicia* sp. parasitising larvae of *T. andamanica* which in turn were in all probability parasitised by what Isaac (1925) tentatively identified as *Aphanogmus* sp.

In the Andamans the hosts of this moth included *Atrabotrys* sp. (Annonaceae) and *Glochidion hirusutum* (Euphorbiaceae) both of which are new host records for the species (cf. host

records in Cock *et al.* 1987).

*Thosea andamanica* has so far been recorded only on coconut and oil palm in the Andaman islands (Isaac 1925, Bhumannavar *et al.* 1991). Both these species were introduced to the Andaman islands for cultivation. While the latter was introduced as recently as in 1975 (Prashanth *et al.*, in press) the former which is native to the Nicobars was introduced to the Andamans by the early British settlers (Temple 1901). Therefore, if coconut is the original host plant of this species, from which it has diversified to include other plants in its diet, then *T. andamanica* must be native to the Nicobar group of islands from where it has extended its range northward to the Andamans.

It is, however, likely that the original food plant of the species was *Areca* (Ansari *et al.* 1992), *Barringtonia* (Holloway *et al.* 1987), *Atrabotrys*, or

*G. hirusutum* (cf. above); in which case *T. andamanica* could have spread/dispersed from the Andamans to the Nicobars or vice versa across the ten degree channel. In such a situation *T. andamanica* would be a native of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

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## 28. STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF MOTTLED EMIGRANT MALES

It was almost the end of July 1992 and the heavy showers of monsoon had made everything turn lush - green. Walking along the grass, near Malwadi, the western outskirts of Pune, my attention was attracted by two males of the Mottled Emigrant (*Catopsilla pyranthe*). The two males were hovering around a *Lantana* twig. I could see the wings of a

female Emigrant on the underside of a leaf. Emigrants generally mate on the ground. The female sits with her wings wide open and projects the abdominal tip outwards. The male lands on her back and clasps her abdomen with the claspers adapted for the purpose. Then he immediately takes off. The female remains suspended.